

# ***NEWS RELEASE***

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***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA  
San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney  
Carol C. Lam***

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***For Immediate Release***

**NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY** - September 7, 2005

United States Attorney Carol C. Lam announced today that a federal grand jury sitting in San Diego handed up a 12-count indictment charging Giovanni Mendoza with smuggling aliens and approximately 692 pounds of marijuana.

According to court documents, on August 17, 2005, Mendoza was the driver of a white Chevrolet Suburban containing the marijuana and at least five illegal aliens when, in an attempt to flee from California Highway Patrol (CHP) officers, Mendoza rammed a CHP patrol car head-on while driving the wrong way on Interstate 8 near Buckman Springs Road (near Pine Valley, California). After the collision, the Suburban came to a stop and seven people ran from the vehicle. No one was injured in the collision. Five of those who ran, all illegal aliens, were taken into custody, but Mendoza and another individual got away. Officers found eleven suitcases containing the marijuana in the cargo area of the Suburban. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration estimates that the wholesale value of the marijuana seized is more than a quarter of a million dollars.

On August 24, 2005, Mendoza was identified and arrested by U.S. Border Patrol agents at a checkpoint located on eastbound Interstate 8 near Jacumba, California.

Mendoza, who has been ordered detained without bail, is scheduled to be arraigned on the indictment on September 8, 2005 at 9:00 a.m., before the Honorable Nita L. Stormes, U.S. Magistrate Judge.

## **DEFENDANT**

Jovanni Mendoza

## **SUMMARY OF CHARGES**

Possession of Marijuana with Intent to Distribute, 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1)

Maximum Penalty: Mandatory Minimum 5 to 40 years in custody followed by 4 years' supervised release and up to a \$2 million fine (Count 1)

Importation of Marijuana, 21 U.S.C. §§ 952 and 960

Maximum Penalty: Mandatory Minimum 5 to 40 years in custody followed by 4 years' supervised release and up to a \$2 million fine (Count 2)

Bringing In Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain and Aiding and Abetting, 8 U.S.C. § 1324(a)(2)(B)(ii) and 18 U.S.C. § 2

Maximum Penalty: Mandatory Minimum 3 to 10 years in custody, followed by 3 years' supervised release and up to a \$250,000 fine (Counts 3 and 5); Mandatory Minimum 5 to 15 years followed by 3 years' supervised release and up to a \$250,000 fine (Counts 7, 9, and 11)

Transportation of Illegal Aliens and Aiding and Abetting, 8 U.S.C. § 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii) and (v)(II).

Maximum Penalty: Up to 5 years in custody per count, followed by 3 years' supervised release and up to a \$250,000 fine (Counts 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12)

## **AGENCIES**

United States Border Patrol  
California Highway Patrol  
United States Drug Enforcement Administration  
Federal Bureau of Investigation

**An indictment is not evidence that the defendant committed the crimes charged. The defendant is presumed innocent until the Government meets its burden in court of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.**